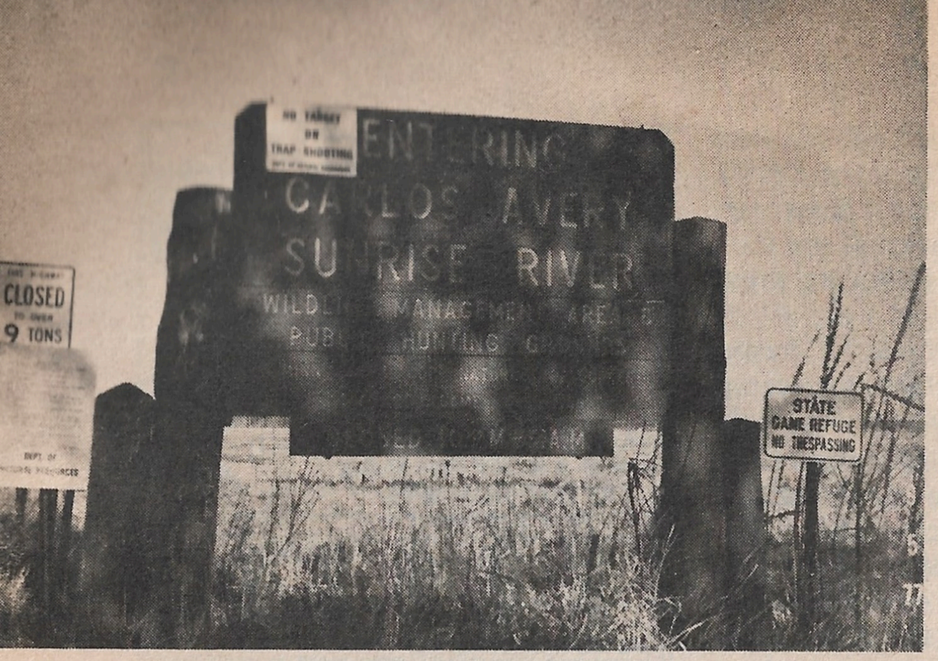


THE THING

That Stalks the Game Preserve

Could the farmers survive the onslaught of UFOs, weird screeching sounds and inexplicable mutilations of livestock?

By Bradley Earl Ayers

WHEN I headed north from the Twin Cities I should have enjoyed the drive through the lush, green, gently rolling hills of central Minnesota. Instead I was troubled, even annoyed at the thought that once more, despite nearly three years of concentrated detective work and several "positive solutions," I was again involved in the macabre business of investigating the mutilation of farm animals.

There seemed no end to such incidents — and no explanation for them either. Law enforcement agencies were either unable or unwilling to solve the mystery. A multitude of answers, usually positing some mundane cause, had been suggested but they all left many questions unresolved. The questions that most concerned me related to the role UFOs played in the mystery — if they played any role at all. Uncomfortable as it made me, I could not ignore the fact that the mutilations sometimes occurred in areas where unusual lights and UFO activity also were reported. Although we could establish no connection between the two phenomena, still I had to keep an open mind.

I turned off the freeway at Stacy, a rural community consisting of a few stores, a gasoline station and several taverns. A couple of minutes later I drove past the rustic log sign that marks the west entrance to the Carlos Avery Game Preserve.

This preserve covers more than 40,000 acres of virgin marshland and woods and is controlled by the state. Stretching for miles on either side of the meandering Sunrise River flowage, it is one of our country's most productive waterfowl breeding areas. Civilization has made little mark on this game preserve. Hunters are barred except when especially authorized and the only human residents occupy a few small farms and scattered homes which remain in the preserve under grandfather provisions.

The two families I planned to visit are typical of the hardy Minnesotans who seem to enjoy the isolation and inconvenience of life in this northern wilderness.

The Art Dahl and Henry Dubo families* have been neighbors an friends for several years. They owi small farms on the eastern edge of the game preserve. In some ways theirs is an unlikely friendship. Dahl is a college graduate with a master's degree in education and works as a teacher in a nearby community. For him farming is a sideline, limited to the small acreage he owns.

Henry Dubois, on the other hand, is a man of limited education who has spent his life working the soil. The Dubois farm is not large: less than 50 acres and badly run-down. But it has been in the family for years, passed down from father to son. Working the farm and other leased land nearby is Henry Dubois's principal means of livelihood.

I found Art Dahl and his wife well-read, articulate and engaging. The Duboises are reserved, unflappable, with a rather stoic attitude. Suspicious of

*These are pseudonyms. The real names are on file in FATE's editorial offices.

Henry Dubois's farm on Minnesota's Carlos Avery Game Preserve fell victim to attacks by a powerful and deadly intruder which left no tracks in its wake.

In this hog pen the Duboises found the remains of grotesquely slaughtered pigs without a trace of blood inside them.

strangers, they keep pretty much to themselves. Besides the four adults, who all are in their mid-30's, both families consist of more kids and dogs than I could count.

Over the years, despite their obvious differences, the two families have developed a deep bond of trust. It was only because of that trust that Dubois finally permitted Dahl to contact me, a licensed private detective, and report the strange events that have been plaguing them.

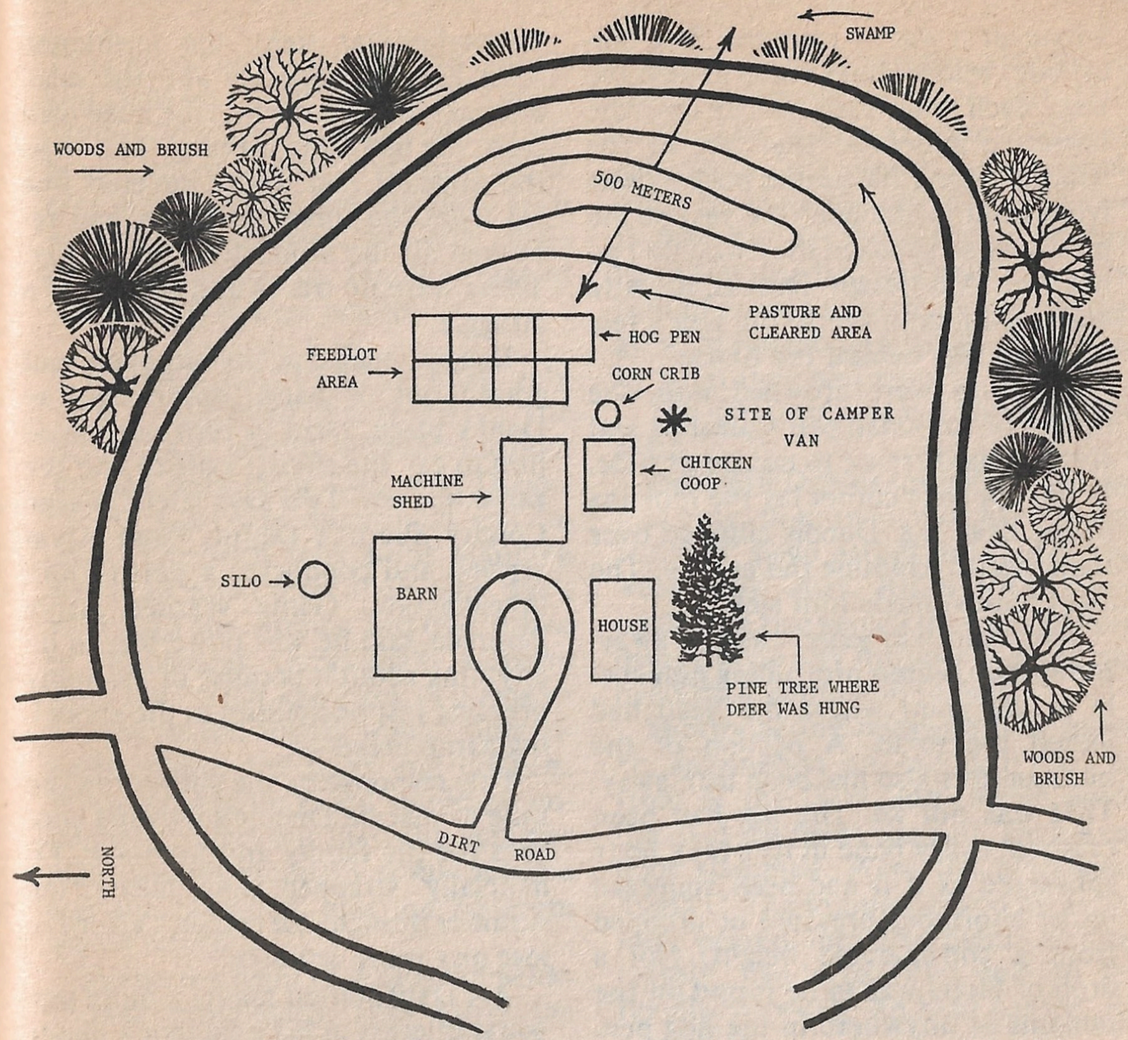
Dahl said they became aware of the presence of something extraordinary in 1971 when the Dubois family spotted an eerie light floating in the darkness over the marsh some 500 or 600 yards behind the barn. During the winter months it appeared quite regularly at about 6:00 P. M. when Dubois went to the barn to do the evening chores. The family searched the frozen swamp several times but found no explanation.

About this time one of Dubois's calves died, apparently torn apart by something with enormous strength. He found the body — what was left of it — in the feed pen. Only the head and part of the carcass remained and even more peculiar, there was no trace of blood in or about the remains or the feed pen. Dubois was upset but had said nothing to anyone and as time passed he put the matter out of his mind.

Later the light over the marsh returned. Again it hung low over the slough, moving back and forth 10 or 20 feet above the cattails and then disappearing into the woods. Dubois repeatedly searched without success for tracks in the snow or — when summer came — for some sign of movement through the almost impenetrable vegetation. There was nothing. Dubois and his family stopped going near the marsh. Then the light went away again and they thought little more about it. They had more important things to worry about.

Dubois hunted in the fall of the year to supplement the family's food supply. Nearly every autumn he would bring down a prize buck and hang it from the limb of the big pine near the house to let it cool in the crisp November air before he butch-

In an effort to detect tracks left by the killer Henry Dubois plowed and graded a security perimeter around the lot.



Map shows layout of Dubois farm including location of camper van in which Dubois and Art Dahl sat in wait hoping to see the elusive nocturnal stalker.

ered it to provide the family with a winter's stock of venison steak and roast. But in the fall of 1975 something strange and frightening took place.

When the family came out in the morning to dress out the kill they found the deer lying on the ground. The thick branch from which it had hung had been severed cleanly from the tree without so much as a saw cut. The big buck's head was gone, twisted off the torso with obvious force. The sight so upset them that it remained vivid in their memories all winter.

Only after this incident with the slain deer did Henry Dubois tell his friend Art Dahl about the strange occurrences at his farm. The two speculated on the possible causes but were puzzled by the absence of tracks or other evidence. Dubois began to keep a loaded rifle near his bed but things were quiet for many months after that.

Then on June 19, 1976, the thing —

whatever it was — returned. The oldest boy, whose chore it was to feed the hogs each morning, rushed into the house to announce that one of the healthy young 100-pound porkers was lying dead in the pen; the rest of the pigs were so spooked they wouldn't go near the slop trough. Dubois, his wife and the children ran to the pen a few hundred feet behind the house.

The pigs were crowded into one corner of the small pen squealing and shoving as if trying to escape or hide. In the opposite corner lay the remains of the dead pig. Dubois climbed over the fence to examine the animal. The sight almost made him sick.

The head was gone, twisted away, the spinal column protruding hideously at the point where the head had joined the torso. A portion of the hindquarters also had been torn away. That was not all. The pig had been crushed, every bone in its heavy body splintered as if it had been squeezed under enormous pressure or dropped from a considerable height. Not a drop of blood was to be found on the remains or anywhere in the hog pen. No tracks led to or from the feedlot; there was no sign of a struggle.

Dubois took to staying up at night, rifle at hand. But nothing happened and after a period of sleepless nights and 16-hour days in the fields, he had to rest.

Exactly one month later, on the night of July 19, it happened again. That morning Dubois had come out of the house and been surprised to find his two largest watchdogs cowering under the back porch. He knew immediately something had happened and he raced to the pigpen to gaze upon an all-too-familiar sight: the frightened herd huddled together and the dead animal lying in a corner, the head torn from the body and missing. This time the attacker had neatly severed one leg from the torso and again had removed all the blood from its victim. There were no tracks and no sign of a struggle.

Dubois, realizing the situation had gotten out of hand, drove over to Dahl's place. Dahl in turn persuaded him to call the sheriff's office and the game warden. Two days later Chisago County Sheriff's Deputy Tom Alvin arrived and conducted a perfunctory investigation. Game Warden Larry Peterson said he was powerless to do anything about it because of his many pressing responsibilities in the sprawling game preserve.

This response by the authorities did little to placate Dubois's growing concern for his family and livestock. Financially strapped and facing the summer drought, he couldn't afford to lose any more animals.

Art Dahl started taking a more personal interest in his neighbor's plight. The two men, assisted by their wives, conducted a systematic surveillance of the Dubois property, paying particular attention to the livestock area, the pigpen and the routes leading from the nearby swamp to the feed area. They were convinced that whatever was killing the livestock had to come from the marsh, where it could approach the pens under concealment.

Dubois plowed and graded a security perimeter around the feedlot, cleared it of vegetation and raked it smooth so that they could easily detect unusual tracks in the soft earth.

They rigged up floodlights and Dubois and Dahl set up a guard post in Dahl's camper which they parked behind the house where they had full view of the area surrounding the feedlot. Both men armed themselves with 30.06 deer rifles and the family's biggest watchdog was kept nearby.

* * *

WHAT HAPPENED next only deepened the mystery. The first nights passed without incident and the only thing Dahl and Dubois had to fight was drowsiness and fatigue. The men took turns standing watch all night after their long day's work and the women brought coffee to the camper. Occasionally a sound from the marsh, the crack of a twig or a noise in the rushes would momentarily silence the frogs and crickets. Whoever was on guard would be immediately alert but then the summer night sounds gradually would resume and the blackness and the boredom would return.

But on the night of August 18 neither man could sleep. They sat in the camper and quietly sipped coffee, not daring to light cigarettes for fear of giving their position away. Midnight came and passed and nothing happened. But some time later Dahl noticed a reddish light in the sky, low on the northern horizon. The light seemed to be some miles away and moving slowly toward them. He nudged Dubois and they both watched as the approaching light assumed a distinctly cylindrical shape, without wings or tail. It arced across the clear night sky, accelerating as it went, then suddenly shot off and disappeared among the stars.

Later, when he was checking the security perimeter on foot, Art Dahl saw it again, a large glowing red disc of light in the sky almost directly overhead. He raced back to the van to alert Dubois but by the time he reached there the disc had vanished. The first light of dawn found the two men groggy with fatigue and totally befuddled by what they had seen.*

The next night was even more bizarre.

Dahl and Dubois resumed their vigil at dusk. Both men had stolen several hours' sleep earlier in the day and were fully alert. Rifles loaded and ready, the two agreed they would both open fire on any intruder that did not heed their command to halt.

Shortly before midnight they heard an automobile on the dirt road in front of the farm. Somewhere down the road the noise stopped. Then a car door slammed. Were the marauders human? The minutes ticked by as the men peered into the night, waiting tensely, hands on rifles and on the floodlight switch. An hour passed. All was quiet.

Then from near the house, behind the men and directly away from the marsh, came a piercing shriek. Dahl later described it as a "screech-growl" and said it was "half-human and half-animal" — the strangest thing he had ever heard. The women, who had been sitting on the back porch of the darkened farmhouse, fled indoors to be near the children.

Minutes later they heard another scream exactly like the first, only this

*I later investigated a report of nocturnal lights in the same general area, on the same date, from a completely independent witness.

time it came from the direction of the swamp. Then another, from the ravine to the south of the homestead, and yet another from back near the house. Dahl and Dubois crouched forward with their rifles in hand. Were the weird sounds signals? If they were, whatever it was seemed to have them surrounded! The frogs and crickets were quiet.

They waited perspiring in the humid closeness of the van, their nerves taut. Although they could see nothing moving, they sensed something was approaching the feedlot.

"Get ready, Henry," Dahl whispered. "They're coming at us."

Over the rise toward the big swamp a large shadow seemed to materialize. The shape was not distinct in the faint light from the stars and fading moon; it was only a dark blob but much bigger than an upright man and it was moving toward them.

Suddenly the big watchdog cowering under the camper bolted for the house, loudly banging the metal floor of the low-slung vehicle as he fled. The shadowy mass stopped for a moment and almost as quickly withdrew back toward the marsh. As it moved over the rise and receded into trackless bog it emitted another bloodcurdling screech. The scream echoed in the stillness after the shadow had vanished.

Dubois switched on the floodlights and he and Dahl quickly searched the immediate area. They found nothing. Emotionally and physically drained, the two men lit cigarettes and forced themselves to resume their watch. The night passed without further incident.

I LEARNED of the case a few days later from Art Dahl who had heard of my investigation of nocturnal lights in the region. After I surveyed the terrain I went to the Chisago County Sheriff's office where they told me about their investigation of the multilation of the Duboises' pig in July. There wasn't much evidence to go on and little Sheriff Floyd Pinotti or his officers could do to prevent another attack.

Then I spoke with Game Warden Peterson who also had looked into the matter of the slaughtered pig. "There wasn't really anything to go on," he said, "but the day I was out there those pigs were sure spooked. Something had been after them. We couldn't get near them!"

What about predatory animals, a bear maybe? I asked.

"We could have a bear in there, I guess," he replied, "although we've found none of the usual signs, tracks or feces. And a bear usually won't kill that way, except maybe when just out of hibernation. July was the wrong time. A bear will tear its prey apart but it would take a hell of a lot of force to pull the head off a hog."

That part of the mystery puzzled me particularly. I asked several veterinarians to estimate the brute strength required to rip the head from a 100-pound hog and crush every bone in its body. The estimates all ran to well over 1000 pounds of pressure.

Before I left the busy sheriff's office in Chisago City I asked a few more questions. What kind of people were the Duboises and Dahls? What about their relationships in the community? Would anyone have reason to try to

intimidate them or play jokes on them? I was told that the families kept to themselves and maybe were even a bit eccentric in their reclusiveness but they were quiet, law-abiding citizens with no known enemies. The officers said there had been no other cases of animal mutilations in the area but a number of people, including one of the deputies, had seen unusual lights in the sky over Carlos Avery Game Preserve.

I asked Art Dahl to contact me if anything more happened in the coming months but the winter passed without word from the beleaguered families. Then in April 1977 I heard from Art Dahl again. Soon afterwards I interviewed the two families at Dubois's farm.

They told me that things seemed to return to normal after the incredible events of August 19, 1976. Although the men continued the stakeout, September and October passed quietly. With the onset of cold weather and the beginning of hunting season, the men gave up the watch. In November, when the deer-hunting season began, Dahl and Dubois crossed the marsh behind the Dubois farm and set up their lookout stands from where they hoped to make a kill. Because of the upsetting events of the summer both men were on the lookout for anything unusual. But everything seemed quite ordinary — with one exception: there were no deer.

Yet there *always* had been deer — plenty of them. They never had experienced any problem making their seasonal kill. Now, however, the woods seemed deserted. The men went out again and again, sometimes alone, sometimes with relatives, with no luck.

Then as the season was nearing its close Dubois's brother Frank burst excitedly into the kitchen of the old house. He had come through the cold gray dusk from the big marsh where he had been hunting. His face was ashen and he had lost one of his gloves. His clothes were muddy and torn from struggling through the underbrush.

He never would go near the marsh again, he announced to the Dubois family. Something strange was out there. It had followed him, moving as he moved, stopping when he stopped, mimicking his every action but always remaining just out of sight in the thick vegetation. He couldn't see what it was but he could sense its presence. It was always just behind him or just abreast of his track through the forest, snapping branches and breaking small saplings, moving noisily with him through the tangled brush. It seemed to know in advance where he would go. Gradually he had become frightened and then terrified. Several times, on the verge of panic, he had fired into a thicket hoping to drive away the phantom stalker. But as soon as he began to move again, *it* was with him. He did not escape it until he emerged from the swamp just back of the farm near the feedlots.

Dahl heard of the episode and a few days later went into the woods alone to investigate. The rugged schoolteacher, who prided himself on his expertise as a hunter and woodsman, returned thoroughly shaken. There sure as hell *was* something out there, he decided. Something that could follow

you through the woods, sensing your every move, just out of sight.

The *something* had to be very large and very strong because Dahl had circled back and found three- and four-inch saplings snapped off high on the trunk where it had moved through the woods. He even tried to ambush the thing by dropping silently into a dry creek bed and crawling on his belly for several hundred feet to double back on his own trail. But no matter what he did, it remained hidden and seemed to know what Dahl was doing.

Finally, driven by anger and frustration, he rushed the spot where he believed his invisible quarry to be. He was stumbling through the woods with his deer rifle trained on the wall of brush in front of him when suddenly a hideous scream froze him in his tracks. It was right there in front of him — the half-human, half-animal "screech-growl."

It echoed through the forest and was followed almost immediately by the noise of something crashing heavily through the underbrush away from where he stood.

The gray November light was fading rapidly in the forest. He didn't want to be out there in the darkness. Art Dahl had had enough.

* * *

THE HUNTING season ended and the bitter cold and heavy snow of the Minnesota winter set in. The men took snowmobiles into the marsh and over the terrain where they had hunted. They could find nothing unusual. The winter passed and spring came — and with it a horrifying new incident.

In early April 1977 the Duboises' Shetland mare gave birth to a colt. The birth was normal, the colt appeared healthy and the mother and offspring were turned out to graze on the tender spring grasses in a small pasture behind the house. Then on the morning of April 20 the children discovered the Shetland mare dead in the field. Its neck had been broken and it had been partially disemboweled. The killer had left a neat triangular incision on its belly. The tiny colt was found alive some distance away, on the other side of the undamaged wire fence. Despite the efforts of the children to nurse the colt, it died a few days later. Dubois was mad now and for the first time I detected a note of real fear in his voice when he talked of the mystery.

He asked if I had any ideas. After all, I had investigated this kind of case before. The two men, with their wives beside them, looked at me expectantly. But I had no answers. I was as puzzled as they were. I suggested the only thing I could do was publicize the story — focus attention on the Duboises' plight and hope some official action might result.

No, they said. They would not permit me to use their names or addresses in any published account. Yes, I could keep the taped interviews but they didn't want any publicity. Absolutely not. Not even the continued loss of the livestock and the possible threat to their welfare was worth having their privacy invaded.

As I got up to leave I shook hands with Art Dahl and Henry Dubois and I wished them good hunting on their stakeouts in the coming months. They would need it.

Some stories about the Egyptian princess' notorious coffin prove to be fictitious but the chilling tales that remain are mystery enough.

By George Wagner

THE HAUNTED MUMMY
Hoax or Horror?

ABSOLUTELY NO more nonsense has been written about any Egyptian curse than has been written about the infamous "Princess of the College of Amen-Ra." I've tracked down nearly two dozen printed accounts of this weird jinx. No two of them agree completely.

As the story is usually told, Douglas Murray, an English sportsman, went on a hunting trip to Egypt in the late 1880's. Near Thebes he purchased the mummy of an ancient temple priestess.

Murray went hunting shortly after he bought the mummy. His gun blew up and shattered his arm. After Cairo surgeons amputated Murray's arm he boarded a ship to return home to London. On the way the Englishman, preferring suicide to disfigurement, shot himself to death.

When the ship reached London the mummy was delivered to Murray's heirs. All who handled it came to a bad end. At length it was given to the British Museum in London where an inquest was held.

In his *Out of the Silence* Patrick Mahony reports the results of that inquest:

"The body was found to be in a remarkable state of preservation. The face still bore marks of paint and rouge; the hair was dark brown and wavy, inclined to be coarse; the eyebrows were thick and the lashes abundant; the eyes themselves were almost covered by fleshy eyelids; the nose was arched and the lips very sensual. The teeth were good with the incisors of the upper jaw projecting as was fashionable in the days when the priestess lived. They suggested death at the age of about 40. *The whole expression of the face was one of intense evil.*" (Emphasis added.)

Ghostly phenomena appeared throughout the Egyptian Galleries, especially near the princess' mummy. So many deaths and accidents were attributed to the mummy that eventually museum officials had to hide it in the basement.

In late 1911 or early 1912 Sir Ernest A. Wallis Budge, Keeper of Egyptian Antiquities for the British Museum, contracted to sell the mummy to New